

Research Article

# Dreams as Intersubjective Dialogic Experiences in Psychoanalytic Phenomenology

**Sudhakar Venukapalli\***

Department of Education, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, India

## Abstract

Dreams are part of our lives. Day and night, we live with them. Dreams are personal and significant to the individual who is dreaming them. The psychological significance of dreams is evident in the unconscious thoughts of our inner concerns, worries, fears, wishes, expectations, and fantasies. No one should underestimate the value of dreams in their lives because they can provide the right direction towards the domains of our lives that require attentiveness, significant associations, or characteristics of ourselves that we are worried about. The significance of dream research primarily lies in its unique and distinctive research methodology, which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. Most importantly, attempting to synthesize phenomenological psychology and psychoanalytic psychology as an alternative qualitative methodology to explore the beliefs and conceptions of children and adults has added much value to recent research work. Psychoanalytic phenomenological investigations search for meaning, aiming to describe, explicate, and understand dream experiences. This approach seeks to capture the experiences of individuals as they experience them, primarily through reflective analysis of experience and meaning. Such hybrid methodologies are well suited to investigating unconscious representational processes and internal representations of self and others.

## Keywords

Intersubjective Dialogue, Psychoanalytic Phenomenology, Unconsciousness, Dream Experience

## 1. Contemporary Psychoanalytic Theories on Dreams and Dreaming

In the history of dream studies, the focus on the problem-solving roles of dreams represents a significant shift in psychoanalysis. Thomas M. French and Erich Fromm [1], in their influential work *\*Dream Interpretation: A New Approach\**, emphasized these roles and aimed to establish dream interpretation on solid scientific and critical foundations. Unlike Freud's interpretation method, which relied heavily on intuition, French and Fromm's approach was based on logic to understand dream phenomena. In the first stage of their in-

terpretation system, the analyst uses intuition to form hypotheses. In the subsequent stage, the psychoanalyst evaluates the evidence for these ideas. French and Fromm stated that the psychoanalyst's role is not to fit information into a pre-existing framework. Instead, they argued for a systematic and critical examination of interpretations. They believed, "An objectively critical approach to interpretation is an art that must be learned." To illustrate their technique, French and Fromm provide several detailed analyses of dreams. However,

\*Corresponding author: [sudhakarvenu.efluniversity@gmail.com](mailto:sudhakarvenu.efluniversity@gmail.com) (Sudhakar Venukapalli)

**Received:** 1 January 2025; **Accepted:** 27 January 2025; **Published:** 21 February 2025



Copyright: © The Author(s), 2025. Published by Science Publishing Group. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

despite the thoroughness of their method, it can be challenging for practitioners not trained in psychoanalysis to grasp or apply it.

Erikson, similar to Adler, viewed dreams as reflections of the dreamer's way of life. He proposed a systematic approach to studying dreams that could be utilized in research; however, this analysis was never implemented in any study. Jones offers a comprehensive overview of the psychological and biological functions of dreaming, which include neutralizing, reorganizing, alerting, and stimulating functions [2]. This enriches our understanding of this complex phenomenon.

Contemporary psychoanalysts have built upon Freud's foundational dream theory. Fosshage [3] suggests improvements to the psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams. He argues that while classical psychoanalysis acknowledged dreams as indicators of underlying wishes, it did not fully recognize their other purposes. Fosshage believes that the developmental, regulatory, conflict-resolution, and reorganizational functions of dreams have been overlooked and insufficiently explored.

Frederick S. Perls [4], a prominent figure in the early days of psychoanalysis and a dedicated disciple of Sigmund Freud, eventually broke away from Freudian teachings to develop the Gestalt school of psychotherapy. His divergence from Freud was profound, particularly regarding the concept of the unconscious mind. While Freud emphasized the importance of uncovering hidden desires from the unconscious, Perls shifted his focus to the immediate experience of the present moment. In stark contrast to Freud's theory, which framed dreams as reflections of repressed sexual instincts, Perls viewed them as meaningful existential messages. He famously redefined Freud's characterization of dreams as the "royal way to the unconscious," instead dubbing them the "royal road to integration." [4]. For Perls, the various elements present within a dream represented fragmented pieces of an individual's personality. He emphasized that it is essential for individuals to reclaim these fractured aspects, to piece them together, and to uncover the complete meaning behind their dreams.

Through his innovative techniques, Perls explored the process of dream integration, often employing role-playing and utilizing individual therapy within a group context. This approach encouraged dreamers to reconcile the elements they had previously rejected. As he succinctly stated in 1969 (p. 121), "...my whole technique develops more and more into never, never interpret." [4].

In his work, Perls [5, 6] popularized the concepts of the "top dog" and "underdog," terms that became widely adopted by various dream analysts. Lillie Weiss described the "top dog" as the self-righteous, authoritarian facet of the personality, which imposes unrealistic, perfectionistic demands. Conversely, the "underdog" represents the more submissive side, often resorting to manipulation through whining or childlike behavior. The perpetual conflict between these two aspects of the self remains unresolved, and Perls aimed to facilitate the integration of these contrasting elements within individuals.

Perls' insights have had a lasting impact on many contemporary psychotherapists who engage with the interpretation of dreams, even as their methods may markedly differ. Another notable figure that challenged Freud's ideas was Ann Faraday, who, building on the foundations laid by Perls and Jung, presented her perspectives on dream interpretation in the early 1970s. Faraday placed emphasis on the present rather than the past, arguing against Freud's notions that dreams serve as wish fulfillments or that individuals navigate life by donning various masks. Her integration of these ideas has contributed to a richer understanding of dreams in the therapeutic setting.

Anna Faraday [7, 8] emphasized the importance of objectivity in analyzing dreams and believed that dreams could be studied through an objective lens. Lillie Weiss highlights the significance of her work, stating, "She notes that the first step in dream interpretation is to check for possible truths about the external world, especially when the dream refers to real people or situations. Only after thoroughly exploring a dream for signs of objective truth should one consider it as a reflection of subjective attitudes toward life. Many dreams can be interpreted on more than one level." [9].

To uncover the message within a dream, Faraday employs Gestalt approaches, allowing different dream images to express themselves. She believes this process should continue until the underlying conflict becomes apparent. The "underdog" in a dream reveals a personality flaw that needs to be addressed, which involves forcing the underdog to confront and assert itself against the "top dog." Faraday recommends initially filling in this personality void. Additionally, she prefers the term "alienation" over "unconsciousness." [8, 9]

Gayle Delaney [10, 11], a psychotherapist with extensive research on dreams, is also influenced by Gestalt theory and Gestalt psychotherapy. Her work is notable for its clarity, despite employing Gestalt principles. Delaney describes the function of dreams using theatrical language, suggesting that people are the creators, authors, screenwriters, directors, and stars of their own dreams. She teaches dreamers how to analyze their dreams and determine their meanings.

According to Lillie Weiss "Delaney offers practical guidelines for a dreamer to incubate a dream and interpret its meaning. In her dream interviewing method, she asks the dreamer to define and describe their symbols as if she were someone from another planet. She also explains how to move from the definition of an object to its underlying meaning. Delaney is likely one of the first dream analysts to provide detailed, concise guidelines for approaching dream interpretation." [9].

One modern therapist who has made significant contributions to the field of dreams is Ernest Rossi. He was deeply influenced by the ideas of Carl Jung and Milton Erickson. Rossi views dreams as creative and imaginative processes, suggesting that they can lead individuals to higher levels of awareness during psychotherapy. In his concept of "growth" psychotherapy, he elaborates on psycho-synthesis, describing it as "the integration of two or more states of being or

awareness to create a new aspect of identity" [12]. According to Rossi, this often manifests as a dialogue between the imaginative powers of the mind and one's conscious attitudes, gradually forming an identity that is reflected in behavior.

The theories mentioned share common features, suggesting that dreams reveal different aspects of an individual's character. They also imply that these facets of the psyche may be suppressed, rejected, alienated, or simply unaware of themselves. All approaches aim to integrate these elements into conscious awareness through processes of integration or synthesis. However, they differ in terms of the nature of the disowned material, which can be seen as suppressed, disturbed, neurotic, or inappropriate. Additionally, these theories vary in their perspectives on the healthy aspects of personality, with differing emphases on disease and personal growth in their interpretations of dreams.

Ernest Rossi, a modern therapist who has made significant contributions to the study of dreams, was profoundly influenced by the ideas of Carl Jung and Milton Erickson. He views dreams as creative and imaginative processes that help individuals achieve higher levels of awareness during psychotherapy. Rossi elaborates on the concept of psycho-synthesis in his approach to "growth" psychotherapy, defining it as the integration of two or more states of being or awareness to create a new aspect of identity [12]. He suggests that this process often manifests as a conversation between the imaginative powers of the self and one's conscious attitudes. Over time, this evolving interaction forms a new identity, which then influences behavior.

The theories discussed share common characteristics and generally assert that dreams reveal different facets of an individual's character. They also imply that these aspects of the psyche are often suppressed, denied, alienated, or unaware of their existence. A central goal across these theories is to integrate these fragmented parts into conscious awareness through synthesis or integration. However, they differ regarding the nature of the disowned material, which can range from suppressed and disturbed to neurotic or inappropriate. Furthermore, theorists vary in their perspectives on the healthy qualities of the personality, placing different levels of emphasis on disease versus personal growth in their interpretations of dreams.

The degree of disparity between manifest and latent dream content is a point of contention among various theories. Some theorists believe that dreams can be interpreted on multiple levels, suggesting a continuum between objective and subjective interpretations. Freud's basic idea—that dreams serve as wish fulfillment for sexual desires rooted in childhood—differs from most contemporary theories, which acknowledge that dreams may have other purposes.

Most researchers argue that dreams convey important messages for the dreamer. Additionally, many theories explicitly contradict Freud's claim that all dream symbols are sexual in nature, asserting instead that each dreamer's symbols are unique. While many dream theories share common char-

acteristics, they diverge in their interpretative approaches. From Sigmund Freud's free association methods to Fritz Perls' experiential techniques, various frameworks aim to understand dreams. Most theories view interpretation as a spontaneous activity with few rules for the interpreter. However, Gayle Delaney is one of the few who provides a comprehensive discussion on how to decipher dream symbols. Although she does not delve into the different phases of determining a dream's meaning, she offers an in-depth exploration of the dream process itself.

## 2. Dreams as Intersubjective Dialogic Experiences

The communicative function of dreams has gained increasing importance since Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories on dreaming. Phenomenologists such as L. L. Binswanger, V. E. V. Gebattel, M. Boss, D. V. Uslar, and D. Wyss focus on communication and interpersonal connection as fundamental aspects of dream experiences. They emphasize the potential for "being" and "existence" that dreaming opens up. D. Wyss [13] expanded our understanding by highlighting the connection between dreams and the concepts of "perspective" and "possibilities." He describes dream interpretation as an intersubjective and dialogic process in therapy. Wyss's approach serves as an excellent example of how dreams can facilitate communication and what they can achieve.

Medard Boss, a Swiss psychoanalytic psychiatrist, developed the Daseins analysis perspective on humanity. His theoretical framework significantly deviates from those of Freud and Jung. Boss formulated his worldview based on the epistemological foundations of phenomenology. Unlike Freud, who viewed dreams primarily as symbolic expressions of repressed desires, Boss considers dreams to be valuable experiences in an individual's life. He believes that dreams are real events and not merely symbolic representations of wishes, objects, or occurrences. For him, there is no separate dream state; dreams stem from the entirety of a person's life. He rejected the Freudian notion of the unconscious as a repository for suppressed feelings, sexual desires, and unwanted wishes that influence a person's behavior, emotions, and actions. According to Boss, classical psychoanalysis and analytic psychology rely on unproven assumptions, with no evidence to support these theories [14].

Medard Boss asserts that there are no psychic agencies, archetypes, egos, or concealed lives; only the "I" exists, which signifies being in the world. The essence of human beings can be discovered within Dasein, meaning "being there." Design in the world of phenomena is open, receiving and responding to a constantly changing environment. According to Boss, to describe such phenomena accurately, we must develop very strict, detailed, and subtle descriptions of their core elements and traits.

Many contemporary psychoanalysts, such as Gutheil [15] and Serog [16], argue that dream interpretation should begin with the dream itself rather than with a theoretical framework. Freudian psychoanalysts often attempt to fit dreams into their interpretative theories, discarding those that do not align. This approach, they contend, fails to capture the essence of human existence and distances us from the reality of experience itself. For Max Serog, dream interpretation resembles understanding art through emotional empathy; it cannot be fully explained in rational or scientific terms. Instead, it is akin to experiencing an organic totality.

Medard Boss criticizes both Freudian classical psychoanalysis and Jungian analytical psychology for failing to grasp the complexities and rich significance inherent in dream experiences. He argues that Freudian reductionist methods and Jung's amplification methods impose their own concepts onto dreams, assuming that some mental construct lies behind them. Boss [17] states that these approaches view dreams as containing something merely assumed to exist behind the phenomenon—a mental construct. He believes there is a continuity between the waking and sleeping states, and that dreaming and waking are not separate and independent entities [14].

The phenomenological approach rejects the objectivist notions found in Freudian and Jungian psychoanalysis. Boss and Serog argued that concepts such as unconscious censorship, the fulfillment of instincts, desires, prototypes, archetypes, and the interpretation of dream symbols are unwarranted and illogical. For Boss, human existence (Dasein) is fundamentally indivisible, and essential aspects of human life—such as primordial spatiality, temporality, attunement or mood, historicity, mortality, and bodyhood—are present whether we are dreaming or awake. Consequently, waking and dreaming are inextricably linked, representing a single human existence.

In the phenomenological framework, a dream is not a disguise, nor can it be attributed to any hidden mental layer or the unconscious mind. The sensory presence of a dream points to subjective existential features that convey meanings similar to those we perceive in the conscious world. Boss emphasizes the process of explication rather than interpretation; as such, the explicator must clearly and adequately perceive what is being presented.

From the phenomenological perspective, most dreams depict the dreamer's existential condition with remarkable clarity. In several therapeutic case studies, Boss demonstrates that an interpreter's strict commitment to the dream phenomenon can bring the dreamer face-to-face with the unrecognized truths of their existential position, often with shocking clarity and effect. Each dream unveils existential possibilities by revealing insights about the individual's sense of space, time, historicity, and bodily experiences, which may not be as apparent in waking life. Thus, the dream uncovers the meaning of unrealized behavioral potential within the individual's life [14].

While Boss dismisses the significance of symbols because looking behind the dream for meaning is pointless, he demonstrates how the dream's structures are fundamentally

important. As a result, he can attract attention to an unrealized life prospect in his waking existence. Man is in the world from a phenomenological standpoint. Understanding dreams requires an understanding of dream existence in the context of a person's whole Dasein. The dream, like man, cannot be reduced to anything less than being present in a meaningful reality.

In his doctoral thesis, Robert David Schweitzer says, "Freud's theory might be seen moving from the dream backwards toward the early events which gave rise to the dream. His theory is thus causal and also reductionist. Jung's formulation moved from the dream forward, seeking to understand the significance of the dream for the person within the ongoing individuation process. Boss regarded the dream as inherently meaningful, revealing the existential possibilities of human existence. His approach is critical of those who look behind the dream phenomena, instead seeking the wealth of significance within the dream itself. Each approach outlined reflects an epistemological basis and carries particular implications for transcultural research." [14]. According to Schweitzer, phenomenology opposes any technique that predetermines the phenomena under investigation, and this criticism applies to both psychoanalytic and other analytic theories.

As discussed above by Sigmund Freud, psychoanalysis describes human mental structure and function as a psychotherapeutic technique. The psychoanalytic dream theory assumes that dreams originate from personal consciousness and have hidden meanings covered by symbols. The implicit meaning of dream symbols can be uncovered through psychoanalytic interpretation and techniques. The dream process is very complex and multifaceted. Dreams result from unconscious impulses and the symbolic narration of unconscious reality. The objects, occurrences, and events that one experience during sleep and show up in dreams are not what they are. They are symbolic substitutes for some hidden mental phenomenon. One can't understand dreams from the symbols they represent. It is necessary to go backwards and explore the complex dream process. Such backward exploration of dreamers' mental phenomena and experiential accounts is called dream interpretation. The technical procedure for determining the meaning of a dream in classical psychoanalysis is to break it down into distinct elements and then collect the dreamer's relationships with each of these elements. The conceptual framework behind this method is that the associative series offered by the dreamer and additions suggested by the psychotherapist will retrace the psychological processes that gave birth to the dream and lead back to the dream's hidden content or unconscious meaning. It is supposed that the definition of a dream, as determined by this method, is the same as the dream's causal origin; the concealed thoughts and wishes revealed by the analyses are considered the fundamental starting points for the dream's formation. It is in this context Robert D. Stolorow and George E. Atwood [19] say,

*"In classical psychoanalysis, the technical procedure for*



*arriving at the meaning of a dream is to decompose the dream into discrete elements and then to collect the dreamer's associations to each of these elements. The rationale for this procedure is found in the theoretical idea that the associative chains provided by the dreamer, supplemented by certain connections and additions suggested by the analyst, will retrace the mental processes which gave rise to the dream and will lead the way back to the dream's latent content or unconscious meaning. It is assumed that the meaning of a dream, as determined by this method, is identical to the dream's causal origin; that is, the latent thoughts and wishes disclosed by the analyses are regarded as having been the elemental starting points of the dream's formation". [19]*

Freud and Jung differed in their understanding of the hidden semantic content of dreams and their interpretation techniques. For Freud, all dream appearances are symbolic distortions of unconscious sexual impulses, and for Jung, they are archetypal images of the collective unconscious. Psychoanalysts with different theoretical beliefs and perspectives differed significantly in their interpretations of dreams. By and large, all the psychoanalytic dream theories moved away from the subjective realities of the dreamers and were immersed in profound speculations about dream consciousness.

The above-mentioned traditional techniques and methods of interpretation of dreams are not problem-free. Many philosophers, psychologists, and psychotherapists have questioned the fundamental assumptions about the origin and interpretation of dreams in various schools of classical psychoanalysis and have proposed alternative approaches and techniques to understand dreams. In this context, one needs to recognize the influence of phenomenology over psychoanalytic theory and practice, which resulted in the emergence of several theoretical positions like phenomenological psychoanalysis, phenomenological contextualism, psychoanalytic phenomenology, etc. The present study takes a psychoanalytic phenomenological qualitative approach. This approach assumes that inter-subjectivity is the basis of all human experience, and we are all embedded in such continually shaped inter-subjective human experience.

Psychoanalytic phenomenology rejects the dominant Cartesian thinking in psychoanalysis, which isolates the mind from everything and individualizes the human psyche. For psychoanalytic phenomenology, "all human phenomena are products not of isolated intrapsychic mechanisms, but of mutual interactions between embodied subjects. Individuality thus comes from the interplay of two subjectivities and can only be supported by this" [18]. Robert D. Stolorow, George E. Atwood [19, 20], and their colleagues contributed substantially to shaping psychoanalytic phenomenology. Drawing insights from Edmund Husserl's phenomenology of intersubjectivity, Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, and Gadamer's hermeneutics, they proposed "phenomenological contextualism". A few fundamental assumptions of psychoanalytic phenomenology are stated as:

*"Our relationships are given in a world that is, from the beginning, a shared world of action. Understanding other persons is fully embodied in the sense of being based on the resonance between my body and the other's body, with the other given in his "expressive bodily presence" So, inter-subjectivity is a sensorimotor, proprioceptive apprehension of others situated in a preverbal communication context based on affective attunement and on an implicit code which is procedural, non-symbolic, and pre-reflective" [18].*

The above assumptions radically deviate from classical psychoanalytic theories of human beings, including the Freudian psychoanalytic theory of human nature, in which human beings are construed in terms of sexual and aggressive instincts. For these psychoanalytic theories, thought and affect, thinking and feeling, and understanding and linking are separate and distinct. Psychoanalytic phenomenology rejects all such binary divisions and depicts the inter-subjective interchange as the "experience of being understood supplies its mutative power" [21]. It assumes human beings as organizers of experience, and "psychoanalysis is seen as the dialogic attempt of two people together to understand one person's organization of emotional experience by making sense together of their intersubjectively configured experience" [19].

The psychoanalytic phenomenological approach focuses on presenting the meanings and structures of personal experiences. For this approach, the distinctive configurations of self and objects that shape and organize experiences are the essential symbolic structures of a person's experiences. In this connection, Robert D. Stolorow and George E. Atwood say, "These representational structures as systems of ordering or organizing principles -----cognitive, affective schemata through which a person's experiences of self and other assume their characteristic forms and meanings. Thus, the term 'representational world' is not equivalent to a person's subjective world of mental imagery. Rather, it refers to the structure of that world as disclosed in the thematic patterning of his subjective life" [19].

The other significant contribution of psychoanalytic phenomenology is breaking the boundary between conscious and unconscious aspects of the human mind. There are no rigid and distinct walls between conscious and unconscious states for this position, but only fluid and ever-shifting emotional intersubjective experiences. In this context, Alessandra D'Agostino and her colleagues say, "This idea of a fluid boundary assembling within a dynamic, dyadic, intersubjective system is in contrast with the traditional notion of the repression barrier as a fixed intrapsychic structure." [18] The above assumptions and proposals of psychoanalytic phenomenology have more significant implications for psychoanalysis, especially dream research.

Human subjectivity is central to psychoanalytic phenomenology, which seeks to unearth the meaning of dreams embedded in the dreamer's everyday experience. In the psychoanalytic phenomenological approach, the researcher with reflexively understood desire approaches the subjects of the investigation and interrogates human meanings during the

entire process of interviews. Psychoanalytic phenomenology attempts to understand "how dreams encapsulate the personal world and history of the dreamer. From our standpoint, the utility of collecting free associations is thus not to re-trace the presumed causal pathways of dream formation but rather to generate contexts of subjective meaning in which the imagery may be examined and understood.

In addition to the discrete elements of a manifest dream, the distinctive thematic configurations of self and object which structure the dream narrative may also serve as useful points of departure for associative elaboration [22-24]. Such themes, when abstracted from the concrete details of the dream and presented to the dreamer, can substantially enrich the associations produced and represent an important source of insight into the pre-reflectively unconscious structures of experience which organize a person's subjective world" [19].

The classical Freudian theory of psychoanalysis, which includes the formation of dreams, is explicated through a set of interpretative principles that guide and reveal the causal-mechanistic paths of dream generation. In contrast, in psychoanalytic phenomenology, these interpretative principles must be regarded as a hermeneutic structure of rules of interpretation that "provide ways of viewing dream imagery against the background of the dreamer's subjective universe". This approach problematizes Freudian psychoanalysis and underlines the idea that a single component in the dream text can be connected to a multiplicity of subjective contexts of a dreamer's life experiences. According to Stolorow and Atwood [19], Freudian theory is most usefully considered a hermeneutic scheme of interpretation rules rather than a causal-mechanistic version of dream generation processes. Freud [28] contended that dream interpretation reverses dream work—which the activity of dream analysis moves backwards along the tracks of dream formation. It would be more correct to state that the dream-work theory reverses the paths taken by psychoanalytic interpretation. For example, the dream-work 'mechanism' of condensation is the theoretical inverse of the interpretive principle that a single element in the dream text can be related to various subjective contexts in the dreamer's psychological life. The displacement mechanism works in a way that allows the dreamer to transpose and interchange the emotional significance of multiple elements within the dream narrative. This helps identify potentially dangerous or conflicting images that the dreamer might try to suppress or avoid acknowledging in their waking life.

The above argument of Stolorow and Atwood can also be extended to the classical notion of a dream as wish fulfillment [19, 25-27]. Dreams as wish fulfillment may be construed as an interpretive principle that leads dreamers to connect dreams with their subjective concerns and emotionally significant experiences. Psychoanalytic phenomenology expands the classical notions of wish fulfillment by proposing "a more general and inclusive proposition that dreams always embody one or more of the dreamer's purposes". This discussion on the potential possibilities of interpretive principles enables us

to understand how they are all helpful in connecting a dream with the complex personal subjective world of a dreamer. In this context Stolorow and Atwood say, "The correctness or adequacy of a particular dream interpretation is assessed by the same hermeneutic criteria that govern the assessment of the validity of psychoanalytic interpretation, in general, the logical coherence of the argument, the compatibility of the interpretation with one's general knowledge of the dreamer's psychological life, the comprehensiveness of the explanation in rendering the various details of the dream text transparent, and the aesthetic beauty of the analysis in illuminating previously hidden patterns of order in the dream narrative and in connecting these patterns to the background structures of the dreamer's subjectivity". [19]

The psychoanalytic phenomenological investigations of the unconscious structures of human subjectivity enable us to see deeper meanings embedded in human experiences. The above discussion makes it clear that human subjectivity is the central domain of investigation for psychoanalytic phenomenology.

One of the fundamental aspects of phenomenological research depends on its in-depth data collection for thick description. Emphasizing the significance of phenomenological studies of dreams, Alderson says phenomenological approaches are "ideally suited when one wishes to gain a richer understanding of an experience or known phenomenon" [29]. In other words, the discovery-oriented perspective of the phenomenological investigation allows the researcher to explore participants experiences and discover "the commonalities among their experiences as well as the ways that they were unique from one another" [30, 31].

What is important in dream research is that the researcher spent a substantial amount of time with the participants to feel and experience their dreaming emotions and experience. The researcher's desire to learn from the participants and his deep interest in their dreaming experiences adds much value to his methodological approach. Schulte says, "Phenomenology was the appropriate qualitative methodology for this study because findings derived from phenomenology provide an understanding of a phenomenon as seen through the eyes of those who have experienced it and identify the essence of human experience related to a certain phenomenon" [31].

One of the essential objectives of the phenomenological study is to identify the essence of experiences of 'dreaming' and understand perspectives about what one experience during dreaming and sleep. Hence, phenomenology is the most appropriate methodology to capture the dreaming experience as it is. The goal of phenomenological study is not to explain the phenomenon of dreaming but to describe and understand the essence of the dreaming experiences of children and adults. In other words, phenomenological researchers "investigate particular experiences as seen through the eyes of those who have lived them; their findings help readers to comprehend those experiences better. They add to readers' awareness and appreciation of others' lived realities." [31]

The psychoanalytic phenomenological approach is the re-

sult of synthesizing epistemological and methodological insights into phenomenological psychology and psychoanalysis. This approach utilizes the following specific techniques:

1. Bracketing of researcher's assumptions.
2. Emphasis on lived experience as described by participants.
3. In-depth interviews.
4. Empathic attunement / an empathic dialectic encounter.
5. Clarification and validation.
6. Uncovering covert and potentially unconscious themes.
7. Expansion of meaning in terms of phenomenal breadth and psychoanalytic depth.
8. Researcher Reflexivity (This includes observing and interpreting participant-researcher transference, researcher-participant counter-transference, and researcher-analyst transference.
9. Thematic analysis and Synthesis.

### 3. Dream Research and Psychoanalytic Phenomenology

Psychoanalytic Phenomenology can uncover conscious and unconscious personalities. Besides this, there are several possibilities for designing appropriate psychotherapeutic interventions to improve the quality of life. Understanding dream experiences would enable us to explore sleep patterns and dream experiences. Dream beliefs and conceptions influence sleep and also waking life. Mood and stress also negatively affect the sleeping process. According to dream psychologists, an individual's personality and waking behavior are closely associated with dreaming and sleeping experiences and vice versa. For example, a person who feels lonely never gets a peaceful and healthy sleep. Nightmares, hallucinations, violent terrors, and violent dreams are common among them. Sleep and dream researchers believe that loneliness leads to poor health by disturbing sleep, which plays a vital role in healing the body.

Dreams are part of our lives. Day and night, we live with them. Dreams are personal and significant to the individual dreaming them. The psychological significance of dreams is evident in the unconscious thoughts of our inner concerns, worries, fears, wishes, expectations, and fantasies. No one should underestimate the value of dreams in their lives because they can provide the right direction towards the domains of our lives that require attentiveness, significant associations, or characteristics of ourselves that we are worried about.

Neuropsychologists, cognitive psychologists, and dream researchers have long stressed the importance of comprehending dreams and dreaming and their role in our emotional and mental health. Based on identifying patterns in prior events, dreams can be interpreted as messages to oneself about what one should pay attention to in the future. Recent research on normal and breast cancer patients clearly show a link between dream content and disease onset. No matter whether we forget

or remember our dreams, they do have an impact on our lives. The study of dreams would enable us to uncover their hidden and potential meaning. Dream analysis would facilitate us in exploring the deepest parts of the self. Further, it would help us to design counseling and guidance sessions and, most importantly, psychotherapy sessions for children and adults.

Dream research needs to be construed within a larger theoretical framework, where several internal and external factors play their role in shaping and forming dreams. The dream is a highly complex socio-cultural phenomenon. Dreaming is not an individualistic activity. It is a social process where the dreamer enters into dialogue with others (persons, objects, events, etc.) and expresses feelings and emotions. People who are deprived of social and community life during waking times suffer from anxiety, stress, and emotional disorders during dreaming and sleep. From this discussion, it is clear that understanding dreams and dreaming is essential to extending counseling and guidance to people who suffer from the abnormal behavioral and psychological problems mentioned above.

The significance of dream research primarily lies in its unique and distinctive research methodology, which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches [32]. Most importantly, attempting to synthesize phenomenological psychology and psychoanalytic psychology as an alternative qualitative methodology to explore the beliefs and conceptions of children and adults has added much value to the recent research work.

Psychoanalytic phenomenological investigations search for meaning, aiming not only to describe and explicate but also to understand the dream experiences of children and adults. This approach seeks to capture the experiences of individuals as they experience them. This is achieved through reflective analysis of experience and meaning. Such hybrid methodologies are well suited to investigating unconscious representational processes and internal representations of self and others [33]. The Psychoanalytic phenomenological methodological approach is not restrictive and constricting. It enables an investigator to actively and methodically examine the complexities of experience. The Husserlian descriptive phenomenology "enables phenomenal clarity that produces the sound basis for interpreting experience grounded in the origin of the material" [34]. Applying the principles of the psychoanalytic phenomenological approach, one can go deep and explore the conscious and unconscious continuities and linkages.

### Author Contributions

Sudhakar Venukapalli is the sole author. The author read and approved the final manuscript.

### Conflicts of Interest

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest.

## References

- [1] French, T. M., & Fromm, E. (1964). *Dream interpretation: A new approach*. New York: Basic Books, Inc.
- [2] Jones, R. M. (1970). *The new psychology of dreaming*. New York: Grune & Stratton.
- [3] Fosshage, J. L. (1983). The psychological function of dreams: A revised psychoanalytic perspective. *Psychoanalysis and Contemporary Thought*, 6(4), 641-669.
- [4] Perls F. S. (1969). *Gestalt-Therapie in Aktion*. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett.
- [5] Perls, F. S. (1969). *Gestalt therapy verbatim*. Lafayette, CA: Real People Press.
- [6] Perls F. S. (1972). *In and out the garbage pail*. New York: Bantam Books.
- [7] Faraday, A. (1972). *Dream power*. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan.
- [8] Faraday, A. (1974). *The dream game*. New York: Harper & Row.
- [9] Weiss, Lillie (2014). *Dream Analysis in Psychotherapy*, Chevy Chase: International Psychotherapy Institute, USA.
- [10] Delaney, G. (1991). *Breakthrough Dreaming*. Bantam Books, New York.
- [11] Delaney, G. (1993). The dream interview. In: *New Directions in Dream Interpretation* (G. Delaney, ed.), SUNY Press, Albany, NY, pp. 195– 240.
- [12] Rossi, E. (1972). *Dreams and the growth of personality*. New York: Pergamon Press.
- [13] Wyss, D. (1973). *Psychoanalytic. Schools From the Beginning to the Present*. New York: Jason Aronson, Inc.
- [14] Schweitzer, R., 1983. *A phenomenological explication of dream interpretation among rural and urban Nguni people* (Doctoral dissertation, Rhodes University).
- [15] Gutheil, E. A. (1951). *The handbook of dream analysis*. New York: Liveright Publishing Co.
- [16] Serog, Max. 1964. The dream, its phenomenology theory and its interpretation. In Harms, E. (Ed.) *Problems of Sleep and Dream in Children*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- [17] Boss, Medard (1958), *The Analysis of Dreams* (Translated by Arnold J. Pomerans), New York: Philosophical Library.
- [18] Alessandra D'Agostino, Milena Mancinib, Mario Rossi Montia (2019), Phenomenology in Psychoanalysis: Still an Open Debate?, *Psychopathology* 2019; 52: 104–109; <https://doi.org/10.1159/000500327>
- [19] Stolorow, Robert D. and George E. Atwood (1993), Psychoanalytic phenomenology of the dream, in Sara Flanders edited, *The Dream Discourse Today*, Rutledge: London.
- [20] Stolorow RD, Atwood GE, Orange DM. (2002). *Worlds of experience: Interweaving philosophical and clinical dimensions in psycho-analysis*. New York (NY): Basic Books.
- [21] Stolorow RD. (2013). Intersubjective-systems theory: A phenomenological- contextualist psychoanalytic perspective. *Psychoanal Dialogues*. 2013; 23(4): 383–9.
- [22] Stolorow, R. (1978). Object-relations theory and ego psychology: A happy marriage? Book review of Object-Relations Theory and Clinical Psychoanalysis by O. Kernberg. *Contemporary Psychology*, 23: 32-33.
- [23] Stolorow, R. & Lachmann, F. (1978). The developmental prestiges of defenses: Diagnostic and therapeutic implications. *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 47: 73-102.
- [24] Stolorow, R. (1978). The restoration of psychoanalysis. Book review of *The Restoration of the Self* by H. Kohut. *Contemporary Psychology*, 23: 229-230. Reprinted in *Psychoanalytic Review* (1978), 65: 622-624.
- [25] Stolorow, R. & Atwood, G. (1978). A defensive-restitutive function of Freud's theory of psychosexual development. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 65: 217-238. Stolorow, R. (1978). Book review of *The Annual of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 3. *Psychoanalytic Review*, 65: 654.
- [26] Stolorow, R., Atwood, G., & Ross, J. (1978). The representational world in psychoanalytic therapy. *International Review of Psychoanalysis*, 5: 247-256.
- [27] Stolorow RD, Atwood GE. (2018). *The Power of Phenomenology: Psychoanalytic and Philosophical Perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- [28] Freud, Sigmund (1900). *The Interpretation of Dreams*, A. Brill (trans.), Modern Library, New York, 1950. (Original work published 1900).
- [29] Alderson, K. G. (2004). A phenomenological investigation of same-sex marriage. *The Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, 13, 107-122.
- [30] Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- [31] Schulte, Susan A. (2008), *Learning from Dreams: A Phenomenological Study*, A Unpublished Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment Of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy, Capella University, USA, November 2008, UMI Number: 3336843.
- [32] Cook, T. D., & Reichardt, C. S. (Ed.) (1979). *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Evaluation*. Sage Publications.
- [33] Bradfield, Bruce (2012), Intersubjectivity and knowing of Inner Experience: Finding Space for a Psychoanalytic Phenomenology in Research, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 53(3) 263-282. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022167812469726>
- [34] Bevan MT. A Method of Phenomenological Interviewing. *Qualitative Health Research*. 2014; 24(1): 136-144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732313519710>